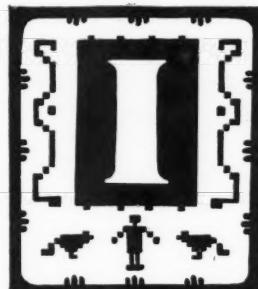


# DESIGN

Vol. XXXI, No. 2

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

June, 1929



N looking back in retrospect thru the past thirty volumes and thirty years of DESIGN-Keramic Studio, it is illuminating to consider the vast number of changes that have taken place in the kind of design that has interested us. "Naturalistic" some of it was called; "conventional" and "abstract" designs were at times popular; now we have "Design Moderne." Yet in all of it there is a common denominator ever constant—that structural quality that makes of art something fundamentally different from nature. It is that factor which, opposed to imitation, is the creative element; thru it the artist enters into his product and identifies himself with it.

Nature undoubtedly is the designer's most dependable guide for we always like the rhythms, arrangements and color harmonies that we are accustomed to in her various expressions. And because we have, not so much in our present lives but thru our racial inheritance, been close to nature we select certain common favorite design qualities and refer to them as graceful and pleasing. Certain value or line arrangements which we have always known in the landscape attract us when expressed in a painting. In short what we know and are familiar with satisfies us. For instance in interior decoration it is always safe to select colors for floor coverings that are the same in hue and value as those found on the ground; we like them dark, usually, and neutral. The ceilings, most pleasing to us, are light ones because we are accustomed to see the sky above us light; blue has always been satisfactory for ceilings. The walls call for more of the variations of the landscape—variety of color and patterns—that are to be found in birds, animals, trees, and flowers.

In accordance with this same theory, furthermore, we have arrived at a stage where we take pleasure in the line and mass rhythms which are definitely those of the industrial machine age. These we are beginning to accept as a natural part of our inheritance. For motors, electricity for lighting and power, the radio, the telephone and aeroplane are no longer strange to us. Many of us have been born into a world of which these form an integral part; so is it not fitting that our familiarity with them should make us enjoy their motifs when used in our art, our designs?

Art as we see it then has two factors: representation and creation or design. The former closely allied with what we usually term subject matter, story telling or illustration is the less important. In fact, some would even go as far as to say that it has little or nothing to do with art. We must demand that the artist be a person with enough insight, understanding and sympathy that when he looks upon life, or nature, he will see its patterns, its rhythms, its behaviors far beyond the insignificant incidents which are but on its surface. He must understand the design of nature and bring that to us. "Art begins where nature leaves off," someone has said, and it must do so thru its design, not thru representation of trivial aspects.

It is the aim of DESIGN-Keramic Studio to bring before its readers new yet vital material which will be of real value to designers, teachers and their pupils from some of the rare collections hidden away in some of the smaller museums in various parts of the country. In this number therefore the first of these discussions appears with photographs and drawings on the rare art of the ancient Mound Builders. Expert craftsmanship from that group of artists known as the Austrian Werkbund must be of interest to those of us who are working independently along similar lines. Miss Marianne Willisch of Vienna, who recently brought an exhibition of this work to us, explains the underlying motive. The comparatively new problem of designing for the theatre realistically or symbolically is presented by Mr. Victor E. D'Amico in a manner valuable to the young designer. In the work done in the classes of Mrs. Edith M. Bushnell, we note how she has made a spirit of our modern age live in the design for our modern generation. And Miss Maria Morris has some interesting finger exercises for beginners in design.



Interesting Amulets like this were made by the Ancient Mound Builders

In the July-August number Professor Ralph Fanning, lecturer with the Bureau of University Travel, will begin an interesting series on the work of the Della Robbias. Miss Katharine Gibson of the Cleveland Museum of Art will present some choice material on old tools of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe in a manner most valuable to the student of design. Miss Ruth Canfield, a ceramic artist of New York City and known for her work done at the Henry Street Settlement and Carnegie Institute of Technology, will describe some of the modern ceramics recently shown in New York galleries. The use of museum material in design, with illustrations of work done by classes in Department of Fine Arts at Ohio State University, will be explained in sequence by Felix Payant.



Amulet in the form of an eagle's head

## DESIGN



LESSONS IN DESIGN FROM THE ANCIENT  
MOUND BUILDERS OF OHIO

*Felix Payant*

*Photos by courtesy of the Ohio State Archaeological Society*

AS we go back to the beginnings of man's development it is interesting to note how much art has had to do with the job of life. From archaeologists we learn that frequently most primitive peoples have had an extraordinary art expression and their feeling for refinement, suitability and restraint in decoration were decidedly marked. One of these cases is the Cro-magnon man who lived at the dawn of civilization in the caves of southern France and Spain. Examples of his aesthetic products have been handed down to us in the form of drawings beautiful in line, form and color which he made on the walls of his cavernous home. There are the drawings on pieces of bone which are very numerous attested to the fact that man at this stage had an art conspicuous in its perfection and quite puzzling to our understanding.

Another similar case of this kind which this article hopes to present is that of the ancient Mound Builders of Ohio who lived hundreds of years ago. And the observations made here are based entirely on the rare collection now to be seen in the Ohio State Archaeological Museum at Columbus. The specimens that make up that collection were taken from the mounds found in the southern part of the state. This strange people, a branch of the American Indian family, has left us much through which we may get an insight into a really fine kind of design in their numerous treasures entombed in the weird and interesting monumental mounds. Perhaps the best known of these is the serpent mound which as its name implies is serpentine in shape.

Naturally, much might be written of these ancient people



but it is of their contribution to art primarily that they are to be considered here. And for want of space and available examples we shall pass by some of their arts which we know reached a stage of great dignity. For instance their textile art is of great interest for they did excellent weaving and from the extremely perishable bits we have left we know that some of them were beautifully decorated—not by woven designs but by some kind of painting. Examples found which were used as loin cloths and other bodily ornament were decorated with large highly conventionalized patterns of circular, oval and scrolled bands much like the copper ornaments reproduced on Page 26. They wore sandals too, which were expertly woven from rushes and in which there is a pleasing, rhythmic pattern. In passing there might be mentioned the amusing motifs of design to be found carved on marbles, on pieces of bone and amulets.

Not to know the mound builders for their small sculpture, their pottery and their work in flat copper is to miss a group of the most fascinating contribution to primitive art in history. And to get an insight into how these expert craftsmen of the past responded to their environment—making use of materials which we have at hand and the nature forms we have seen all our lives—cannot but give us renewed inspiration to work from what we understand without borrowing from extraneous sources.

The ceremonial pipes which are found in great numbers must have been rather generally made, showing that the appreciation of exquisite design was the usual rather than the exceptional thing. Because they were used for ceremonies and on great occasions the lack of similarity between them and what we know as pipes can be readily appreciated. These pipes are not large either for the greatest length of the base or stem through which there is an opening leading to the bowl is something about four or five inches; they are made of grey pipe-stone which lends itself



Ceremonial Pipes made from familiar Animal forms

Elaborately fashioned pipe, intertwining about bowl.



ducks' heads, with necks  
Note the dignity of line.

to carving of this sort. The subjects or motifs used in forming the bowls of the pipes were usually animals and birds with which they were very familiar, namely: otter, racoon, wild cat, beaver, dog, owl, eagle, heron, raven, partridge, pheasant and duck. This intimacy with animal life about them is shown by the postures or gestures which they made use of in designing. The owl for instance with its head turned completely backward is a characteristic and peculiar attitude; the raccoon with his forefoot in a hole in search of his prey is an interesting touch; the beaver with his tail forward between his legs, the heron with a fish, the dog in the humorous pose barking at the moon are all evidences of added interest to the design. In some cases there were more elaborately fashioned pipes; one an effigy of man in which the figure is treated very abstractly, much like the totem poles of the Alaskan Indians, and another photographed here in which two ducks' heads are used with greatest subtlety of line and with the necks intertwining about the bowl.

It is difficult for us to conceive of such complete understanding of art structure for, primarily, they have selected such forms as would most easily suit the rotundity of the bowl. There is throughout an admirable feeling for simplicity of form—dominant form treated simply with all secondary forms and decoration properly subordinated. As is so essential in sculptured form, the silhouettes or contours are readily read and understood. Chastity of form with astounding rhythmic relationships of form, lines and masses seems to be the summary conclusion to draw from their careful study. In surface decoration occasionally fresh water pearls were used for eyes of birds and animals, but when they appear they invariably take their places well among the incised lines which very formally give interest and refinement to the surfaces, yet never interfering with the dominant form. All decorations as done is a most formal thoughtful way, uniformity of line and general deco-

rative treatment give evidence of a great art which has far surpassed a stage of naïveté. The accidental and incidental in nature of which there is so much to wade through in a great deal of realistic art is omitted or rather eschewed by these ancient artists of Ohio. They have seen and selected the significant for us; they have really so carefully studied and understood the underlying design feeling of nature about them that they have been able to see beyond casual surface matter to greater and more vital material.

The pottery too, exemplifies this feeling for simple dignity of form. How abstemiously the clay was used; what economy of line is shown in the curves of the contour. The decoration always is in subordination to the form and produced in such a way as becomes a piece of clay and done with clay technique. Certainly an artist with great understanding must have produced the vase (Page 25) on which is so knowingly placed the conventionalized duck. What designer will not respond with joy to the feeling of how that decoration is a vital part of the whole; every line is an echo in rhythmic repetition of the vase itself; each element in the entire piece co-ordinates in making this unique, charming piece of pottery. Is there not something that the Ohio potters of today might learn from a study of the understanding, simple dignity of the potters of the Mound Builders?

In the copper ornaments (Page 26) are, in most cases, abstractions of the animals again and the other forms of life about them. The largest drawing on the page of copper designs shows an impressive conventionalization of a serpent's head and others are obviously fish motifs; one is probably taken from the foot print of a bear and others from some quadruped, perhaps a rabbit. These ornaments were worn in most cases as breast plates or attached to clothing in some way, for not only are there small openings through them with which they were fastened, in most cases, but when they were found in the mounds there were textiles

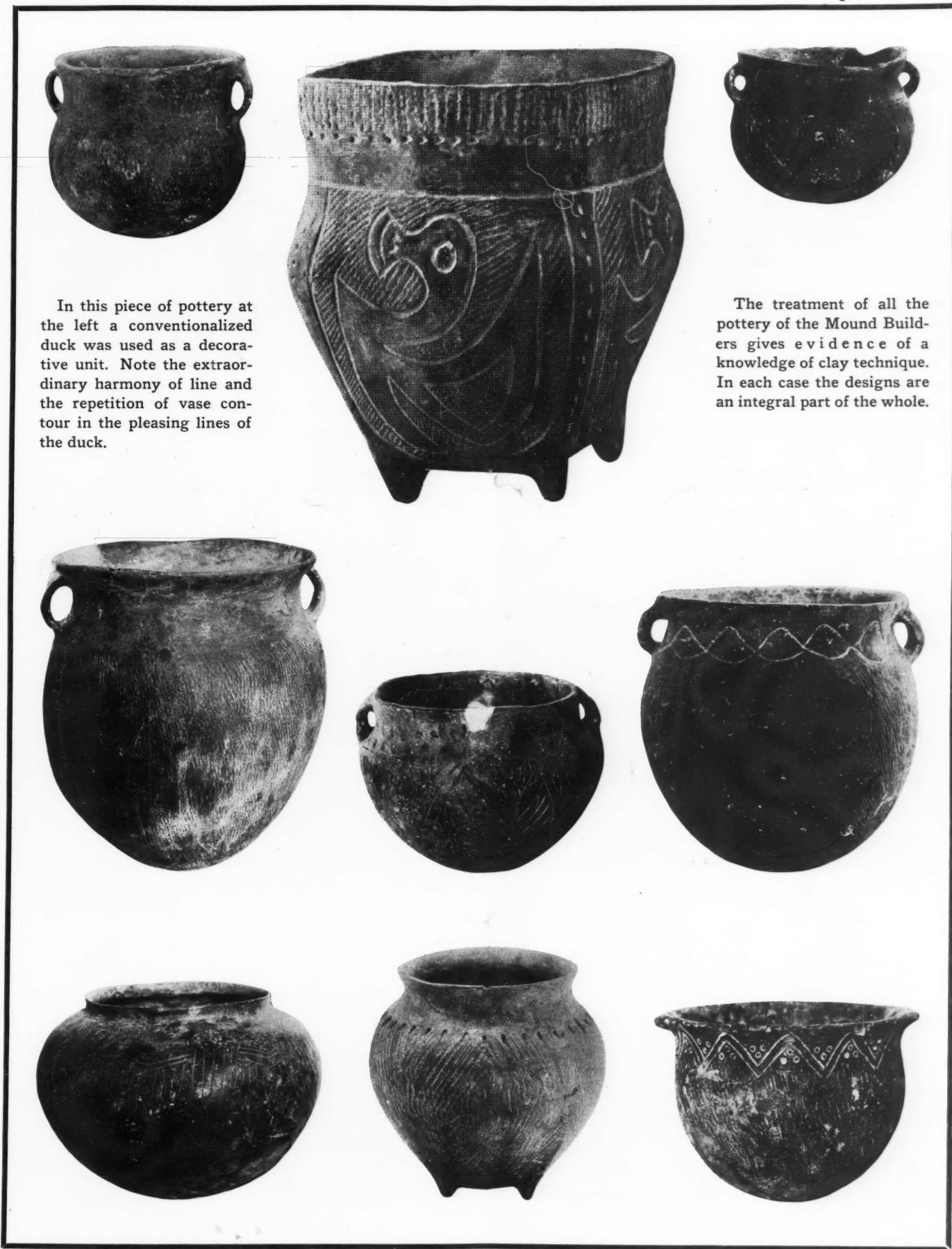
(Continued on Page 29)



Ceremonial Pipes made from familiar Animal forms



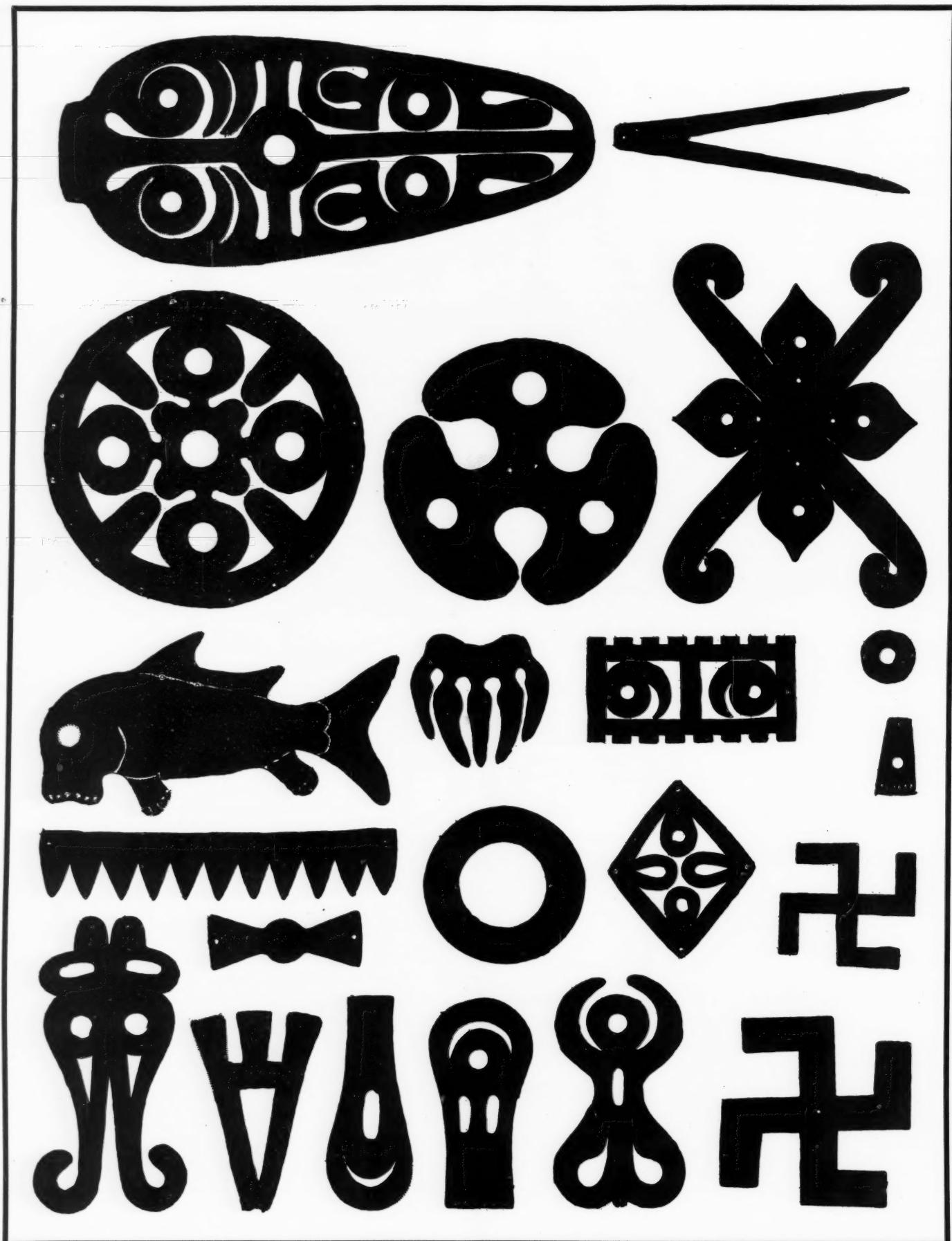
Ceremonial Pipes made by the Mound Builders in which Familiar Bird forms were used



In this piece of pottery at the left a conventionalized duck was used as a decorative unit. Note the extraordinary harmony of line and the repetition of vase contour in the pleasing lines of the duck.

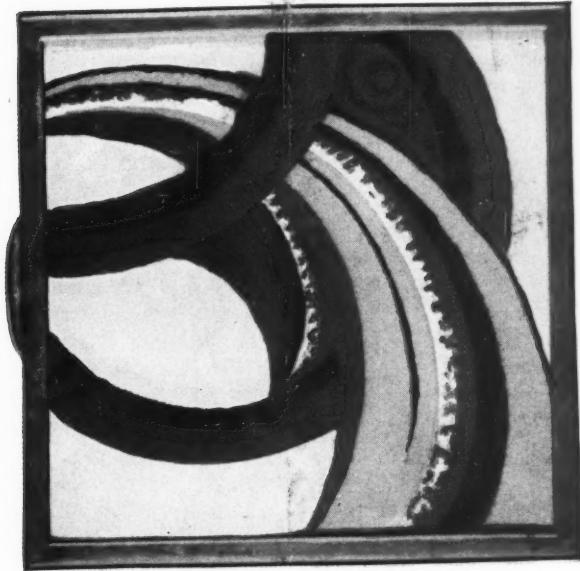
The treatment of all the pottery of the Mound Builders gives evidence of a knowledge of clay technique. In each case the designs are an integral part of the whole.

Pottery of Mound Builders showing Decorations



Copper Ornaments Worn for Decoration by the Mound Builders

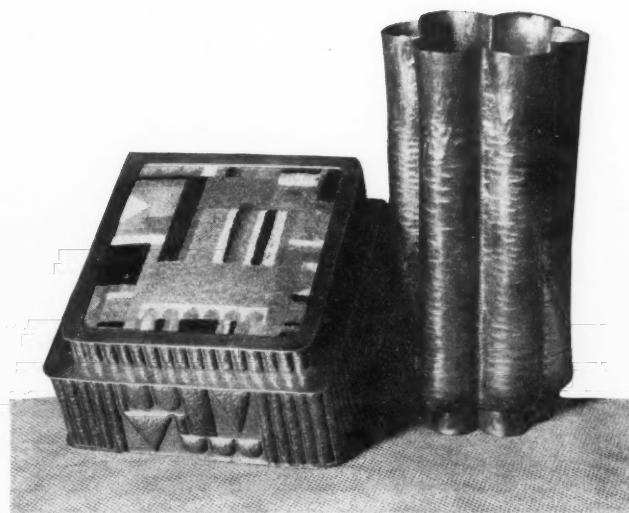
ENAMELED SILVER BOXES—AUSTRIAN WERKBUND



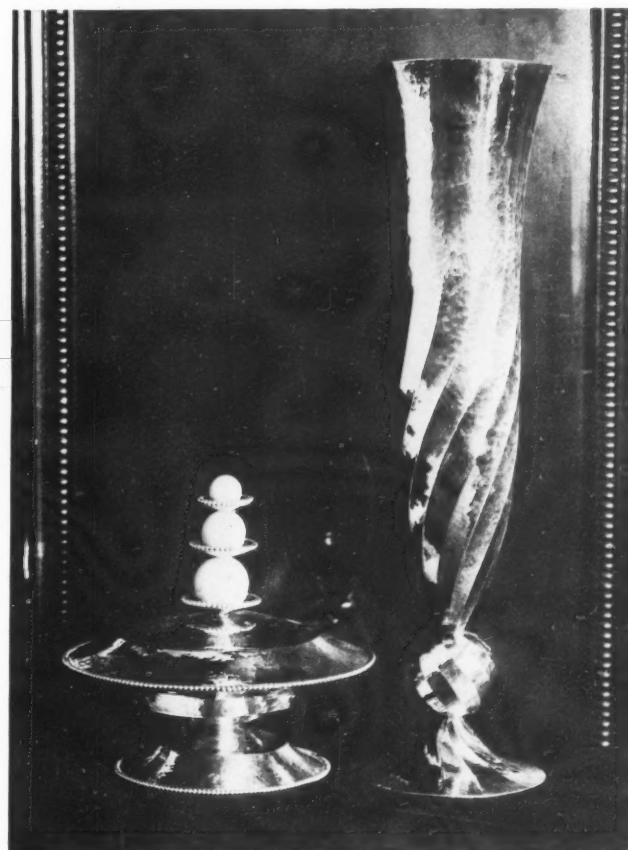
JUNE, 1929  
SUPPLEMENT TO  
DESIGN  
KERAMIC STUDIO

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SYRACUSE, N.Y.





Hand-wrought Brass Vase with Enameled Brass Box



Hand-wrought Silver Vase and box with ivory knobs showing Eastern influence in its pagoda form frequently found in Austrian craftwork

### THE DESIGN AND CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE AUSTRIAN WERKBUND

*Marianne Willisch*

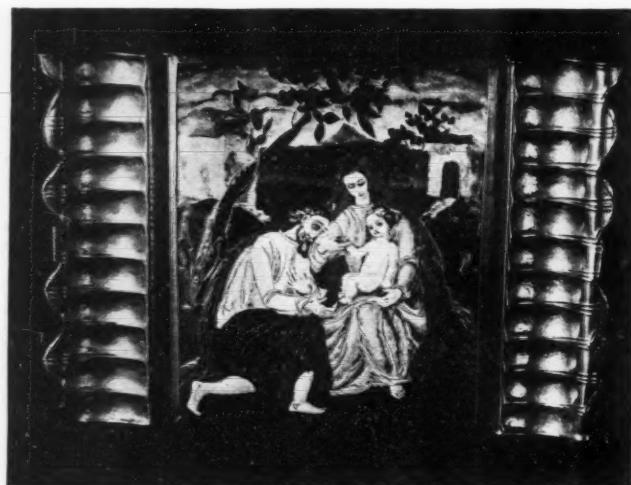
COMING to the United States as a foreigner, it strikes one as a very astonishing fact that America, the most progressive of all countries, still shows a certain conservatism with regard to its artistic taste, in general. On the other hand, the artistic circles (that I, coming with an Austrian Craftwork exhibit, had occasion to frequent) show a strong tendency toward a new and different kind of self-expression in art. Certainly there is no lack of modern exhibits many of which give occasion to sympathize with those who are apt to receive a shock at the mere suggestion of anything "modernistic," but there are others that show what fine work is really being done and what we may hope to see more of in the future. On one hand we have the artist, especially the craftsman and designer, striving to break away from old forms that no longer mean anything to him and to find a really true expression of himself and of his time; and on the other hand the general public, conservatively clinging to all the old forms in ornament and design, in structure and line, creating a tension which always marks a period of new developments. In the eighties and nineties of the last century, we had similar conditions in Europe. The tremendous technical creations, the growing importance of the machine and machine work, and as a result the change in social life, were striving for expression in art. But the big public, educated to certain conventional forms and designs in the fine arts, as well as in architecture and craftwork, was by no means inclined to accept this totally different artistic expression. Knowing the difficulty of putting over an idea, also realizing the dangers of such a revolution in art, where old forms have lost their significance and new ones of established value have not yet been found, several groups of artists founded co-operative workshops and craftsmen's guilds in Germany and Austria. One of these is the Austrian Werkbund of Vienna.

Illustrations of some of the craft-work of this guild accompany this article. Now what are the artistic tendencies of these organizations in general and of the Austrian Werkbund in particular? Their foremost principle is that an artist of our period, if he is absolutely sincere, should not

and could not copy forms and designs of the past. Every work of art is not only an expression of its creator, but to a certain degree also a reflection of the whole period in which it has been created. A style resulting from the work of many creative spirits and crystallizing after a long development is a natural growth like a flower or a tree which cannot be transplanted. A plant put into other soil, with other hands to cultivate it, will become something totally different. Likewise, if we build a Renaissance or Gothic house, or draw a Renaissance design or Gothic ornaments, it will never be Renaissance, never be Gothic, because we have not the same background as the people of those days. The styles of the past, the works of art, of bygone days, should be studied and venerated and they will inspire every artist but if he, himself, has something to give, something to say to us, he will also have his own way of expressing it. In trying to find these new ways, in striving to create adequate expression in line, form, and color, one thing is most essential, that is, to keep up the good old tradition of craftsmanship, and in fact, to try to work out to the utmost perfection, each of the many techniques employed in the craftwork of today. The Austrian Werkbund has always laid special stress on this point. The craftworker of our time must more than ever be a master of his technique. He must also have a thorough knowledge of the materials in which he works, and moreover, he must not overlook the requirements of utility, if he is designing an article of use. It is by this means that we will achieve more art in the trades.

All of this indicates that no designer will be able to

## DESIGN



Cloisonné Picture of Holy Family, in a Conservative Composition  
Hand-wrought Brass Frame

create a really first-class design for a technique in which he, himself, is not thoroughly versed. If we look at some of the so-called primitive works, where we sometimes find designs and forms of unique perfection and everlasting value, we will feel this unity of material, technique, and original expression, perhaps of the characteristics of a race or tribe, rather than of an individual. It is in acknowledgment of these facts that the modern, continental craftsman will not feel in the least hurt, if someone draws comparison between his work and primitive folk art. As, for instance, between modern weaving and the work of the American Indian along that line. The modern craftsman feels that he can often learn from these primitives regarding their technical mastership, as well as their absolute sincerity.

Considering that the artistic principles of the modern European artist guilds are moving in the same direction, one naturally feels interested in discovering whether or not these viewpoints have helped to create generally character-



Hand-wrought Brass Vase and Box

istic features in modern European art and craftwork. If this is true, it would show that quite a definite, new style is slowly developing. I have purposely avoided calling it modern, or still worse, "modernistic" because most persons hearing this will involuntarily think of the mass of incoherent things that are being shown under that name. It is not these that I am referring to. I am thinking of the really fine work of absolutely genuine artists, who by no means wish to be sensational or merely "different," but are striving sincerely to find the most complete self-expression and at the same time expressing our period with its tremendous revolutionary and dynamic powers most definitely. One of the most striking features in modern work, be it fine arts, craftsmanship, or design of any kind, is the tendency toward the abstract. The artist does not seek his model in nature, does not wish to give a realistic representation of organic forms, but gives us his individual conception and impressions in line and color. This explains why the



A Colorful Plate with decoration made up of beautifully rhythmic lines



Enameled Plate with Brass Edge showing playful and somewhat grotesque design characteristic of the Viennese

geometric design is predominating. The inclination goes more and more toward a certain sternness of line with simplicity of form. Whereas, in the earliest period of the modern movement, we find the stylized floral design, this alternates with designs of rhythmical curved lines, which in the last years are being replaced by more severe geometric forms, with angles predominating. Colors are strong and rich, contrasting color combinations being more and more favored. If these are quite generally the outstanding

if I may say, near to the soil, this choice group of Austrian artists are working. How far removed they are from anything sensational or merely fashionable. It has been a great satisfaction to me to find that when taking a craftwork exhibit of the Austrian Werkbund through America, people seemed to feel all this and our things meet with so much appreciation and understanding wherever they are shown.

We have seen how very fertile the co-operative work of our society has proved to be, and we think that it would be a very fine thing if the craftsmen of all countries would join in such a co-operation. Bringing the Austrian Werkbund exhibits to the United States was one step toward the realization of the dream of a world-wide association of artists and craftsmen. The Austrian feels that he has quite a lot to say to the American; on the other hand, the Austrian artist is eagerly looking forward to all the inspiration that he may get from the development of modern American art.

Meantime, it would be well to join hands across the ocean and form a bond of good will and friendship. And in realizing the ideal for the future of mutual understanding between all nations let the pioneers be, as at all times—art and the artists.

\* \* \*



Niches with Glazed Figures

features of modern European designs, each country has of course its special characteristics.

In speaking of Austria and its representative Craftsmen's Guild, The Austrian Werkbund, one will see that throughout the works of all its various different personalities, there is a certain strong outstanding rhythmic and musical feeling. You will sense it in the enamel design on the jewel case shown here with its fine curves and which at the same time gives you an idea of the richness and glow of color that is also quite characteristic of Austrian work. You can see the same deep, rich colors in the silver enameled cigarette case. In this design you find a geometric ornament combined with a rather grotesque little animal design. Strongly stylized figure-work, a tendency towards the grotesque, the humorous and amusing, is quite typical of Viennese craftwork. Everyone who knows Vienna and its surroundings—the lovely lines and the green hills of the Wiener Wald, the rich beauty of the city, with its exquisite old palaces and cathedrals—who also knows and understands the Viennese people in their gayety, as well as in their deep seriousness, will see all these features reflected in their art and in their craftwork. They will know how to appreciate the very characteristic art expression that has been developed in Vienna during these last thirty years. In saying this I wish to indicate how absolutely sincere, and



Dog Barking at the Moon

#### MOUND BUILDERS

(Continued from Page 23)

with them. Besides the copper plates there are many examples of flat design in mica ornaments six or more inches in their longest dimensions and in these the human figure as well as the eagle's foot were often used. They were cut with the same skill and control demonstrated in the other crafts.

For designers there can be no better way to achieve vitality in creative work than by positive, forceful stimulation. This stimulation may be of many kinds but there can be no stronger stimulus than contact with workmanship of this character.

A marked response is shown by the students of design as they come face to face with such vital creative designs as these in the Ohio State Archaeological Museum. This work is a direct result of a strong intelligent race in its job of making its accessories of life beautiful—its home, clothing, tools and utensils.

## DESIGN

## REALISM AND SYMBOLISM IN DRAMATIC PRODUCTION

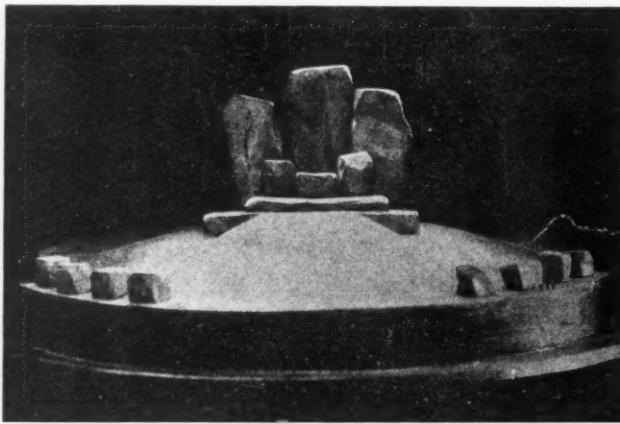
Victor E. D'Amico

Ethical Culture Schools, New York City

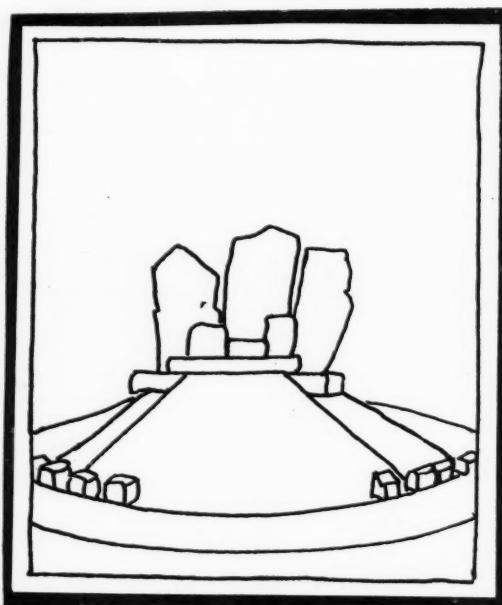


UR present art period is represented by a confusion of odd sounding names which may convey the impression that we have a great variety of delineations in terms used. But this is a misinterpretation, for all of these seeming differences can be classified under two headings—realism and symbolism. More commonly these classes are known as the academic and the modern arts. Vanity is a human weakness; we display this weakness when we are willing to believe that we are the creators of any entirely new knowledge. Thus we speak of modern art, and we believe that we are talking of an entirely new discovery to the world. In Paul Frankl's "New Dimensions," he says that the ancient Egyptian and Babylonian arts are very similar to our modern art in spirit. Our modern set-back skyscrapers that loom above Fifth Avenue are vastly like the structures of the ancients, and the Chanin Building on East Forty-second Street is not unlike the ancient Assyrian Ziggurat in its structure and simplicity. What we are wont to call modern is found paralleled in primitive work and is a new expression of a fluctuating, but eternal tendency.

The division of the art into two classes—realism and symbolism—stands intact for these classes are constant and each age follows one or the other, or both, to a greater or less degree. Both classes oscillate between extremes; realism sways between itself and stark realism and symbolism swings between itself and impressionism. Kenneth MacGowan says, "Realism has been all things to all men. To me it is just one thing; an absorption with the ephemeral exterior of the time in which we live." Therefore we might think of realism as the literal or detailed representation of a thing, time or place. On the other hand symbolism is the essence, character, spirit, or mood of a thing, time or place given suggestively. I will give a simple example in poetry.

Photo from *Theatre Art Magazine*

In this setting by Norman Bel Geddes the mood is at once set. Foreboding and tragedy hang in the heavy air. The throne is rugged and worn, symbolizing the decline of power, reason and age. Geddes has caught the mood of the play and set it forth with an heroic and dramatic gesture.



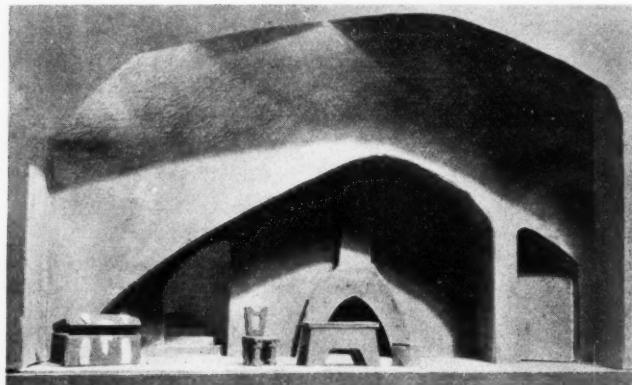
The above drawing is a line analysis of the Geddes design. Note how the oblique lines lead to the throne seat. The circular steps rise to it and the heaviest and largest masses are at the center of interest which is the throne seat. All these elements plus the light effect focus the attention on the center of interest.

Let us say that I wish to give an idea or feeling of a tree. I say that a tree has roots, trunk, branches and leaves. While these are detailed facts of trees in general, do they arouse the emotions to the real feeling of a tree?

Allow me to quote from the poem "Trees," by Joyce Kilmer:

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast,  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray.

Just this much of the poem is sufficient to show the contrast between the realistic element and the symbolic element. One who knows and loves trees cannot help feeling the spirit in the poetic description. While the literal description of the tree names all the facts; the poetical figure named none, but built the picture suggestively. In a chapter on *The Value of Abstraction*, Hiram Kelly Moderwell summarizes the thought in relation to art. "We cannot envisage facts except through abstract deductions. The thing represented



Stage model for John Masefield's "Locked Chest," by a student of stage design at the Fieldston School, New York City.



The sleep-walking scene from "Macbeth" here is in the symbolic phase. The opposition of lines in the design, the weird color scheme, the striking contrasts of light and dark and the suggested weightiness of the masses all add to the tragic dramatic moment of the play. The whiteness of the draped figure of Lady Macbeth stands out like a streak of light across a dark wall. The audience cannot miss the main motive, but is directed at once to it and the dramatic moment is accelerated.

is of no value, can be seen in fact every day in the real world, what is of value is the relation of abstract qualities."

As realism and symbolism govern the fine arts in general, they also become the vital elements in stage production. Dramatic action is the most important part of stage production and all else is subordinate to it. If any other thing calls attention to itself, it is not good, regardless of its individual beauty. The question is—what does it do for the play? For this reason, realism by its detail, its ornament and its striking color, takes the attention away from the actor and the dramatic motive. The attention of the audience is scattered over the variety of detail and the actor has difficulty in calling attention to himself by the sole instrument of his lines. Thus the dramatic action is impeded; first because the audience has to locate the actor in a distracting background, and secondly the tone of the actor's voice and the actor's lines alone are left to create the mood of the setting. In an accompanying sketch the thought is illustrated. It is the sleep walking scene from *Macbeth*. Notice how in one case the detail of background and ornament vie with the solitary figure of Lady Macbeth, who should be the main motive of the scene.

In the other case symbolism strikes the mood of the play, and by its simplicity its subordination of design to dramatic motive, focuses the attention upon the actor. In short it puts its finger directly upon the actor and action of the play. With the mood of the play struck and action indicated, the audience is ready to receive the play and the dramatic motive is accelerated.

Sheldon Cheney says in his book *Stage Decoration*, "A good simple imitation is better than a bad fancy one. Decoration, scene, lighting, must be subordinate to one man's conception of production. Suggestion—a Gothic arch for a



This design for the sleep-walking scene in "Macbeth" is rendered in the realistic manner and calls the attention of the audience away from the actor by its abundance of detail and ornament. The color scheme, while attractive, does not echo the mood of the play. It is too warm and radiant for so tragic a moment. The general soft lines of the design, the ornate lanterns represent festivity and life rather than mystery, weirdness and death.

cathedral, a shadow of a pyramid for an Egyptian setting." Of the two designs for *King Lear* the first is in the realistic phase, the second is one by Norman Bel Geddes in decidedly symbolic trend. This sketch with its lighting effect, its gradation of values, its direct lines and its distribution of masses focuses the attention at one point, the throne chair. In the first sketch the mood of the play is not affected as the setting might be an interior for any play necessitating a place scene. In Geddes' model the mood is set at once with a foreboding and tragic air. *King Lear* is all that, he is at the decline of his years, his reason is also on the decline, and his reign is at an end. Thus Geddes has caught the mood of the play and has set it forth with an heroic and dramatic gesture.

Stage design as an art is a recent development of our contemporary period. "Ten years ago color, like design, was merely representative," says Moderwell. The setting and background of the play were least thought of in the theatre of the past century. What scenery the stage producer employed was realistic and of the poorest kind, but however a few great minds like Appia's and Craig's saw the need and possibility and it is to them that we owe the credit for our progress.

#### TREND OF THE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF DRAMA

The development of this art has shown itself in different countries in different schools of drama, the most prominent today being the Russian, the German and the American schools. The Russian school is famous for its vigorous color and freedom of design. Its symbolism approaches impressionism and often invades it. The German school leans decidedly toward the abstract. Its simplicity and conventionalism of design places it well inside the realm of symbolism. It may be safe to say that the German theatrical

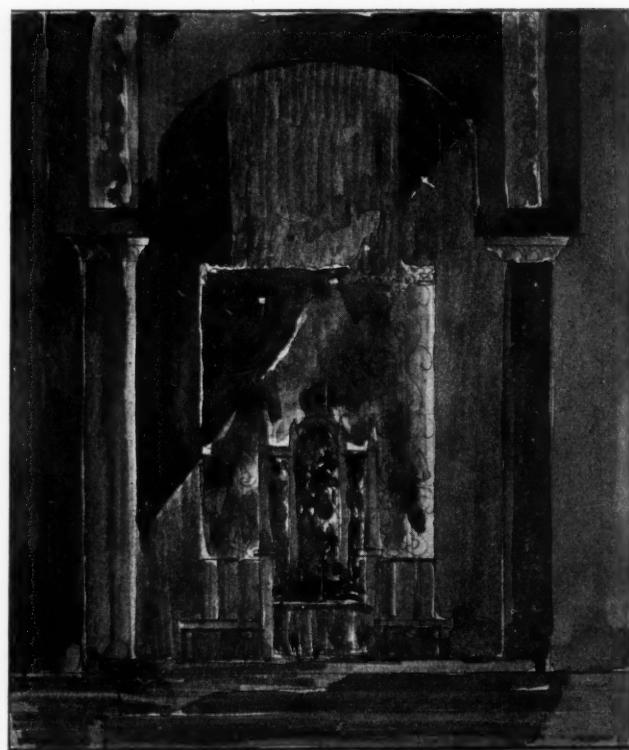
and even the photo-productions have established a graphic conception of the term "Modern Art." The American school of drama is composed of both tendencies and their differences. While realism prevails to a marked degree in most plays, the producers and playwrights of distinction and taste place the finer part of American productions in the symbolic class.

The tendency on the whole seems to be toward symbolism and away from realism. Realism, especially stark realism, is on the decline. This change is not due to a fanatical upheaval by any one individual or group of designers who are merely seeking something new, but to a condition that arose from the decided want which the more observant saw and sought to remedy. The fact that most prominent producers employ designers who work in this new trend is an argument in favor of symbolism. These designers are men of genius and they represent the finest intelligences that the stage has to offer. Prominent producers like Max Reinhardt and eminent playwrights like Eugene O'Neill, employ the genius of artists like Norman Bel Geddes, Robert Edmund Jones and Lee Simonson. Two years ago Norman Bel Geddes designed the sets for Eugene O'Neill's play *Lazarus Laughed*, in a decidedly symbolic key, simplicity of design and color bringing forth the Biblical story with such striking effect that no amount of realism could not have attained such results.

There is still another argument for symbolism. Modern theatres are rapidly increasing in size and approaching the scale of the Greek amphitheatre. Great distance makes detailed settings impractical and ineffective. Simplicity and boldness of color, form and light are necessary for carrying power. These are the very principles that govern symbolism. I do not mean that the small theatre is passé or that it is even on the wane, but I do mean that the large theatre is developing a condition that must be, and is being met by the theatre world.

#### THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE THEATRE

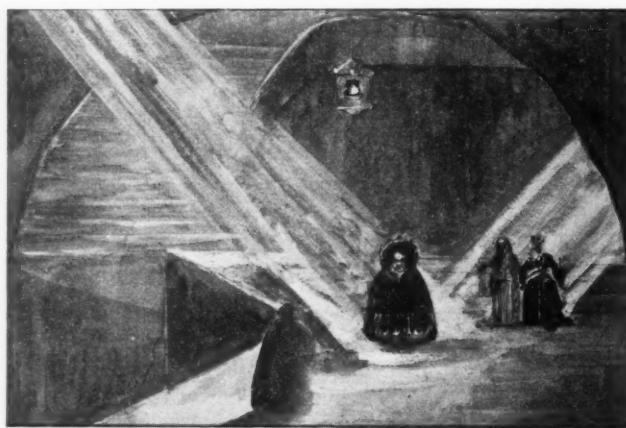
"I believe that the future of the theatre lies with the American people," says Kenneth Mac Gowan. Therefore apparently, regardless of the strides that other countries have made, the future hope of the modern theatre looks to America. Why is it that the torch is flung to young America to bear? The staging of plays is an expensive project and America has the wealth to carry on the experimental undertaking. Also there is perhaps a great opportunity in this country since in both the commercial and amateur world, the drama is growing rapidly. America also has



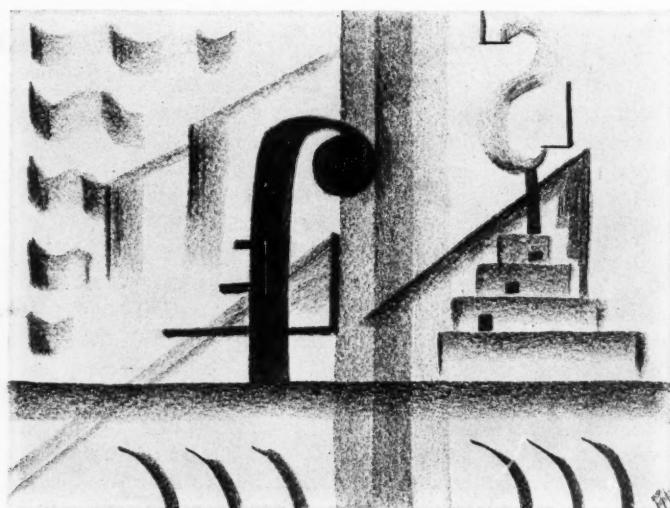
This stage design for "King Lear" misses the mood of the play, as it might be a setting for any play necessitating a palace scene. Its attention to realistic detail destroys dramatic effect. The ornament in the throne, the fine tracery of the screen behind the throne, the ornateness of the arch, all draw attention from the center of the stage—the throne.

talented youth and genius. Norman Bel Geddes and Lee Simonson are comparatively young men and we believe that they are yet to give us their best ability.

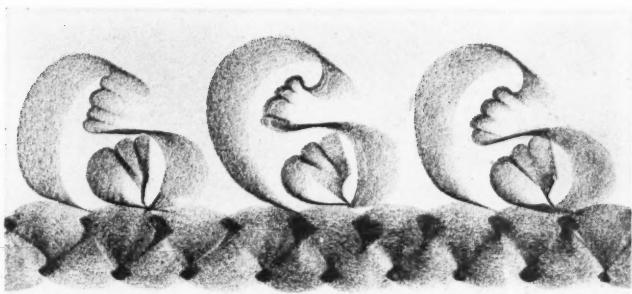
Whatever foreign or cynical American critics have to say about the tastes of the American people, fine art is certain to summon ample support. One of the attributes of Americans is their diversity of interests. While they patronize slap-stick comedy and sentimental baggage, they can still enjoy the refined recreation of the intelligentsia. If the hope of the theatre looks to America, the hope lies in the development of the new theatre which has symbolism as its basis.



A Stage Design for a Japanese Play



Mary Louise Meyer



#### RHYTHMIC MODERN DESIGN

*Edith M. Bushnell*

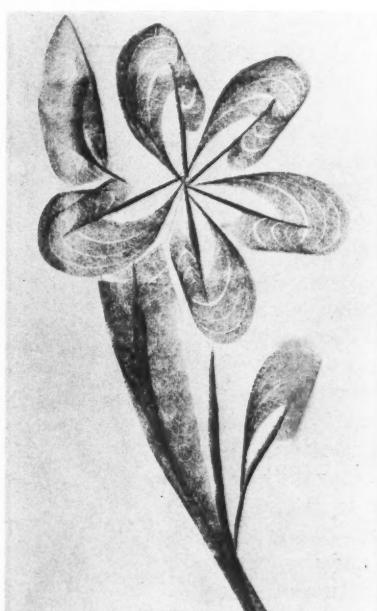
*Polytechnic High School, San Francisco, Calif.*

IN planning a design that has grace and beauty as well as modern appeal it is wise to consider quality of interpretation as well. In this group of borders there is a charming sense of rhythmic feeling that changes the former type of borders to new interpretations that become at once interesting and decorative. These borders may be translated into any medium suitable for any kind of decoration. In doing these borders, the students are trained to take charcoal or lithograph crayons and do the work of repetition directly. In doing the work directly the result gives a freshness and variety with similarity that is very pleasing. This

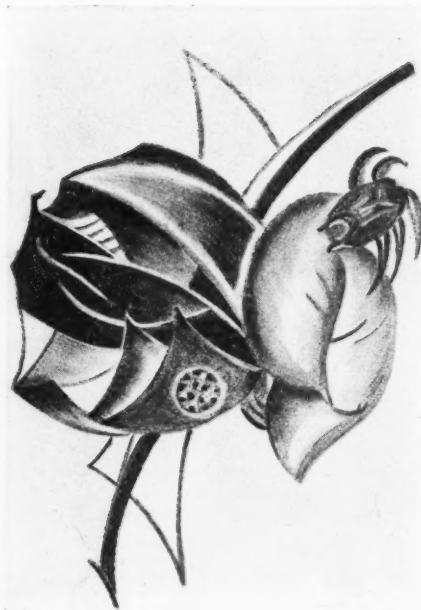
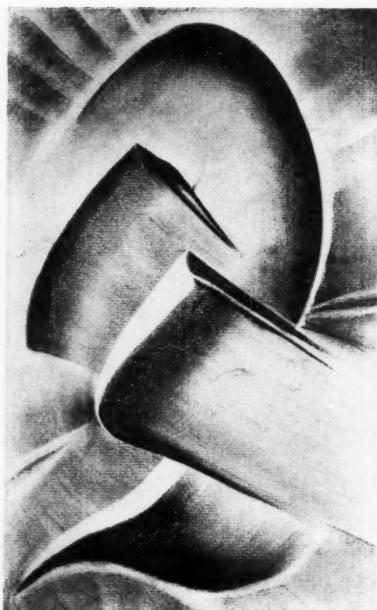
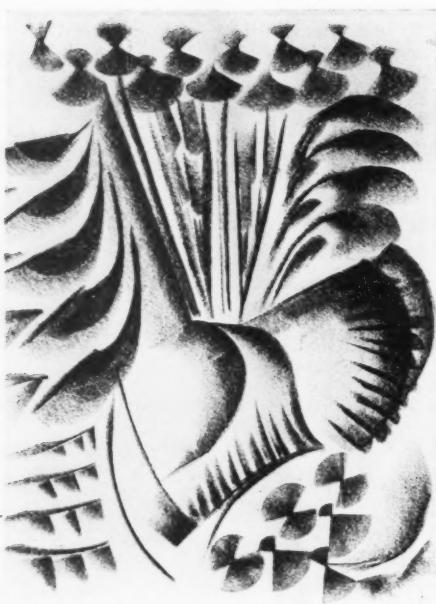
is not usually the case where the repeated pattern is transferred or traced from an original unit.

In doing the flower designs, the method used is free expression. The student is allowed a great deal of freedom and encouraged to express flower life in the abstract instead of any particular flower. We encourage students to aim at beauty of quality in technique, as well as art in production. The abstract design forms are studies for formal decoration and can be used in any type of design or any medium where the more formal type of design is desired.

When we work in color fabrick crayons or hard pastels are used. Some are even done with colored chalk because of its beautiful color. If it is desirable to decorate a large surface then use an air brush with stencils. Stencils are valuable in places where repetition is planned. You will



Rhythmic Designs made with Lithograph Crayons



notice the beautiful texture of these drawings and I am happy to tell you that there is as much individuality in the way the medium is handled as there is in the thought expressed. I find this a most useful problem because the student finds encouragement to forge ahead and put personality into his product.

#### VOLUME IN DESIGN

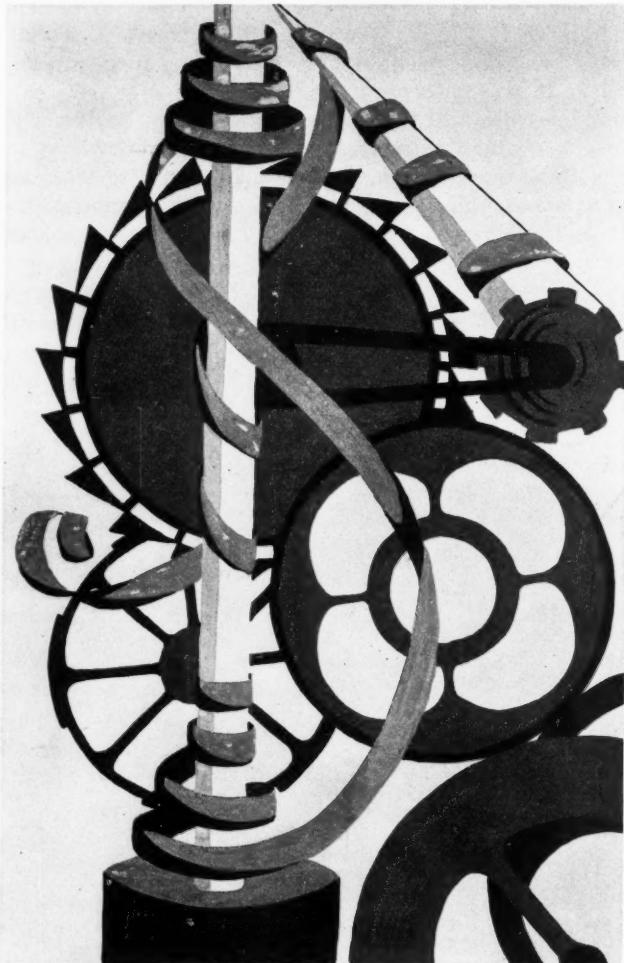
Now that the flat simple poster and decoration has given way to what is termed "Volume in Design" we have been doing some work that proved interesting as problems in that type of design. We have for so long been satisfied, in the schools of this country, to make and use many so-called peasant units, changing them a little here and there, gaining results that would pass. This new point of view in decorative design seems to violate many of our pet hobbies and prejudices.

Volume now is most interesting; especially when color is used, for it gives an opportunity for us to do with design what we formerly did with the color wheel, gaining charm through sequence of values. We are enabled to express more form and yet keep clear hues and values. This new color attitude results in rich, deep color that appeals to our boys. It is used so that the charm of full chroma is preserved and yet it is accompanied in all cases by a sequence of tints and shades. The areas are carefully considered so that the entire space is agreeably filled to the delight of the producer as well as the spectator. There is a very large range of possibilities and much interest is being shown in this, our last adventure.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE MACHINE

These designs were the result of a special class problem or problems given to an opportunity group to work out. In the first place the appeal of the machine has crept into so much of modern commercial advertising that I was persuaded to consider this problem for interpretation. We secured many old watches and small clocks to get the inspiration for these designs. We proceeded to take them apart to save and use the interesting material. We studied these springs with their flat ribbon-like steel and the wheels of all kinds and sizes. Here we found distribution of space division, interesting radial sequences, lines and forms of beauty.

When planning posters or all-over pattern we sometimes resorted to cutting the wheel in sections for the desired use. We talked over the use and charm of wheels in decorative design and then the class proceeded to utilize their training in fundamental design, to produce the interesting pattern that was the result.



Inspired by the Works of a Watch—Evelyn Fross



Design from a Machine—M. Rivera

TO DESIGN IS TO BE MODERN

*Maria Morris*

*Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas*

As a design approach to art to overcome the helplessness in the beginner these exercises were used.

First, in order to call attention to the fact of line, the discussion drew from the student that a graphic language is natural. Simple examples were used, such as: What will people do who are for some reason or other toying with pencil and paper? They will draw, not write. Every design teacher knows the disadvantage of a student's having learned to write before learning to design. Every student wants to draw, and wants to draw animals and people without realizing these are the most intricate of existing forms. The double hypothesis upon which these few exercises were planned was: There is no reason why anyone should not be able to draw what he wishes to draw. And in order to learn how to draw a student must first become a designer. After the discussion of the natural graphic language, the point was developed that what is put on the paper is a line or lines, and that these lines are arranged. Then it was agreed that a young child is at first attracted by movement and color, but will very soon arrange, probably in simple rhythmic manner the objects it handles. The instinct for graphic expression and for arrangement, then, were the first phases of design covered in the first lesson, with the additional factor of expression of what the individual considers beautiful, not ugly. This point of beauty was not stressed at this time, but recalled from time to time as the course progressed.

Then the procedure was: The student was given two small pieces of paper, and asked to put on each piece of

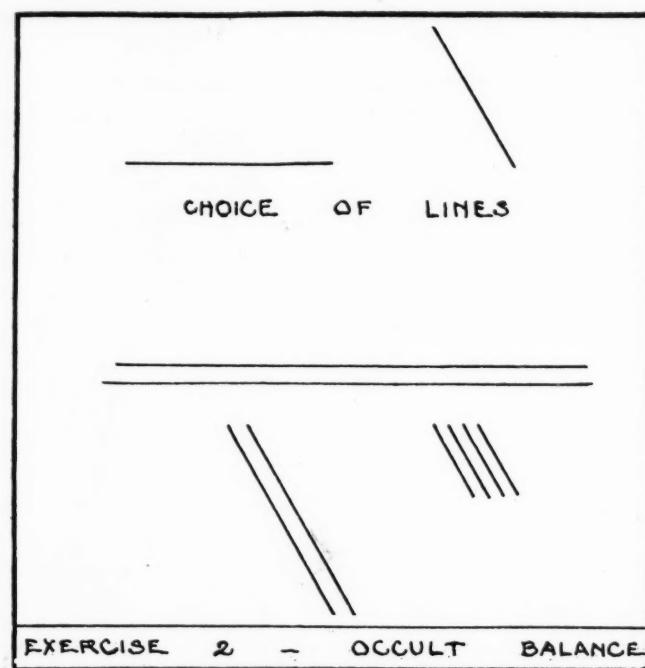
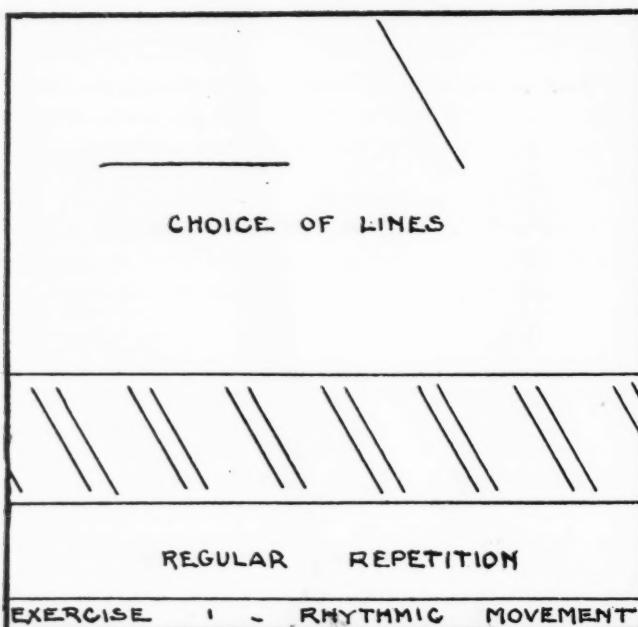


Influence of the Machine—Ronald Muller

paper his name and any two lines he might choose. The student kept one piece of paper and the teacher the other, and the two papers were duplicates. All sketches were entirely free hand. The reason for the teacher's copy was to control the tendency of the student to try to cover up mistakes or make changes as mistakes were discovered rather than to try to abide by the requirements of the exercise as dictated. Exercise 1 shows two lines chosen. The beginner cannot always describe what he has done. It required discussion before these two lines were described as both straight, and as one horizontal, the other diagonal. Effort was made throughout the course to stress direction of line as an important phase of design, especially modern design. Of course the student knew the lines were straight, but had not "thought of it in that way." The requirements for Exercise 1 were: Repeat the lines regularly. Do not change the direction of line.

After the sketches were made there was discussion to show the importance of realizing at the start that limitations are unavoidable and even desirable, and that they should be set and recognized at the start. It was recalled that the scheme of creation is order, and that we work with proper freedom only by obeying Nature's laws. For example, the "artist" was cited who says he works only as he feels because his "art" cannot be hampered by rules. Then an example was given suggesting what would happen if we had no traffic laws. One or two such examples served to show that there is lack of freedom without thoughtfully formulated laws. It was said: "Since you

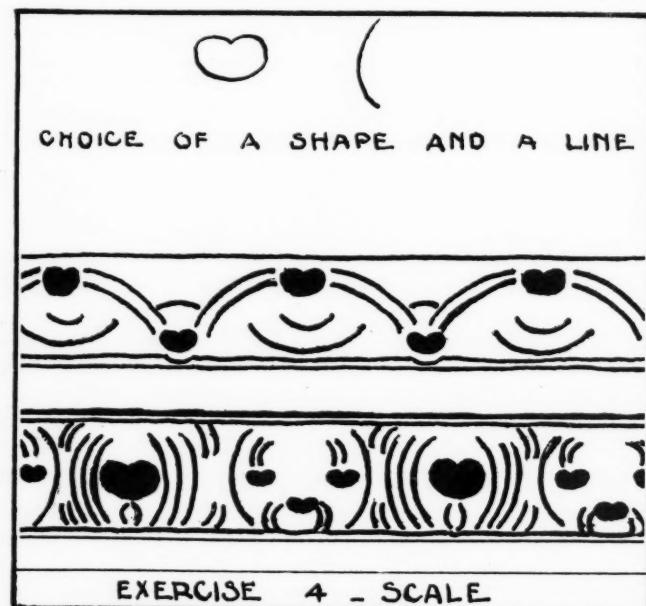
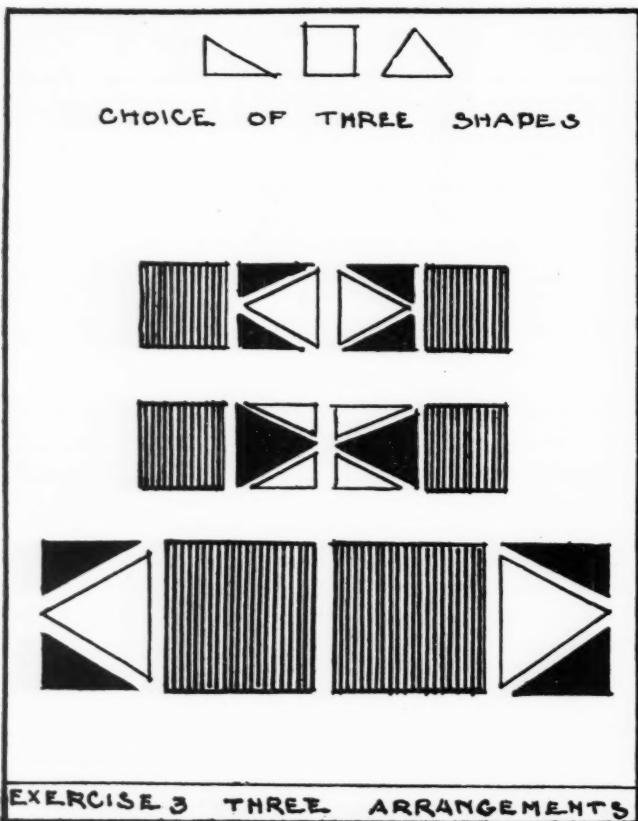
## DESIGN



must work under limitations, set your limitations first, then they will help you and not hinder you as they do the freak 'artist' who resents instead of accepting them and making capital of them." By limiting change of direction of line the results were kept simple and so were less static and ordinary than is usual with beginners. The desire of the primitive for bi-symmetry needed to be watched in order to obtain variety of result. Hence no change of direction. And the instinctive preference for ordinary forms such as squares, circles, and equilateral triangles likewise was to be considered. A text was used after the first classroom lesson. All principles were illustrated as discussed. For

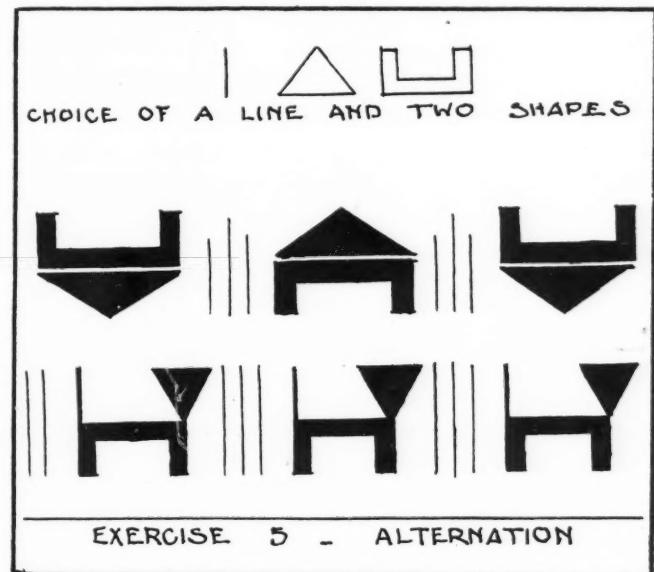
example, the first exercise showed rhythmic movement, the second, balance, the third, some recognition of proportioning shapes, distributing lights and darks, and a combination of emphasis and scale. Results were posted for class criticism, and the value of comparisons thus made and inventiveness thus developed asserted itself in succeeding exercises. Restraint on the part of the teacher was necessary in order that the student might not be told what he already knew. It was said: If you are learning to swim, the point is you already know, but you don't know you know; so it is with design—you can design, you just don't know you can.

These students were of three types usually—one saying, "I know how to design," but unable to be definite in oral expression,—that is, in describing what had been put on the paper with comparative ease; another type saying, "I don't know anything about this," and implying he cared not at all, and who also said, "I don't know how to start"; and a third type that considered the whole lesson childish and



trifling. A very few were willing to put themselves into the hands of the teacher and try to let time and labor show any possible merits of the course. If patience and labor on the part of both student and teacher were required, it was most gratifying later when the student finally realized this method was better than drawing from objects. The student had to do his own observation and express graphically what he observed.

Exercise 2 was: Choose two lines. Design a motif. Repeat both lines. Use occult balance. Do not change direction of line.



Exercise 3 was: Choose three shapes. Show three arrangements of them. There may be change of proportion, position, and value,—all three,—or you may confine yourself to two changes only, as, proportion and position.

Exercise 4 was: Choose a line and a shape. Design two borders showing play upon scale. Combine this idea of scale with that of emphasis (which had been discussed in a previous lesson). In the first design change the size of the line, but not of the shape; in the second, change the size of the shape, and of the line, if you wish. Change the size of the line or not, as you wish. Show emphasis in each border. Criticism and comparison of these designs brought to light that fact that, depending on the choice of elements, the line (or the shape) might be better to choose for change of scale or for emphasis; the principle of selection was illustrated.

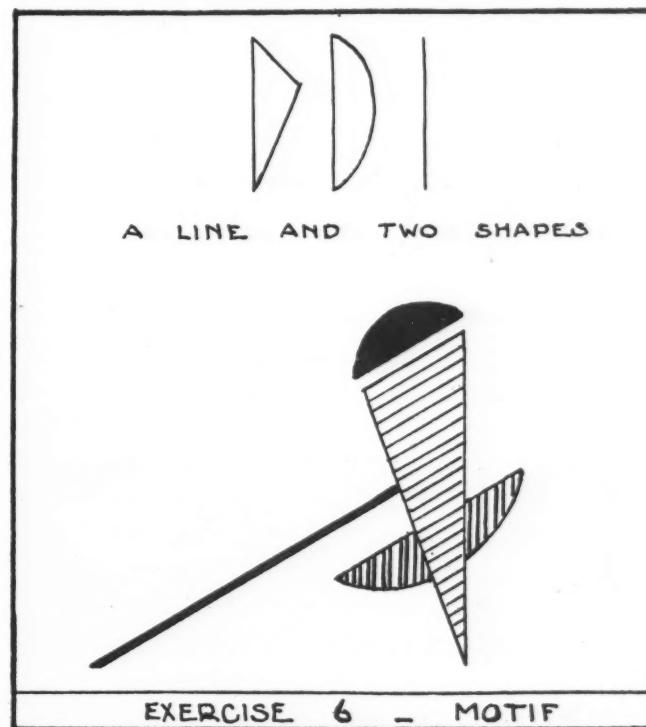
Exercise 5 was: Choose a line and two shapes. Design two borders both showing repetition. Show an animal in one if you can. The intention was that this exercise amuse. The animals were practically all entertaining. This exercise is considered superior to one which might dictate: Draw an animal—a dog, cat, or rabbit—arrange it in a rhythmic manner to form a border. The student in that case will always try to draw instead of design. There will be almost no thought at all of a choice of beautiful shapes or lines to compose the animal. The teacher who would assign such an exercise would probably be guilty also of saying: "Sketch a humorous animal and put it in a border." In Exercise 5 as illustrated no mention of humor was made until after the sketching was done when it spoke for itself graphically.

It was considered of especial advantage also that the student did not know in any instance what he was to do

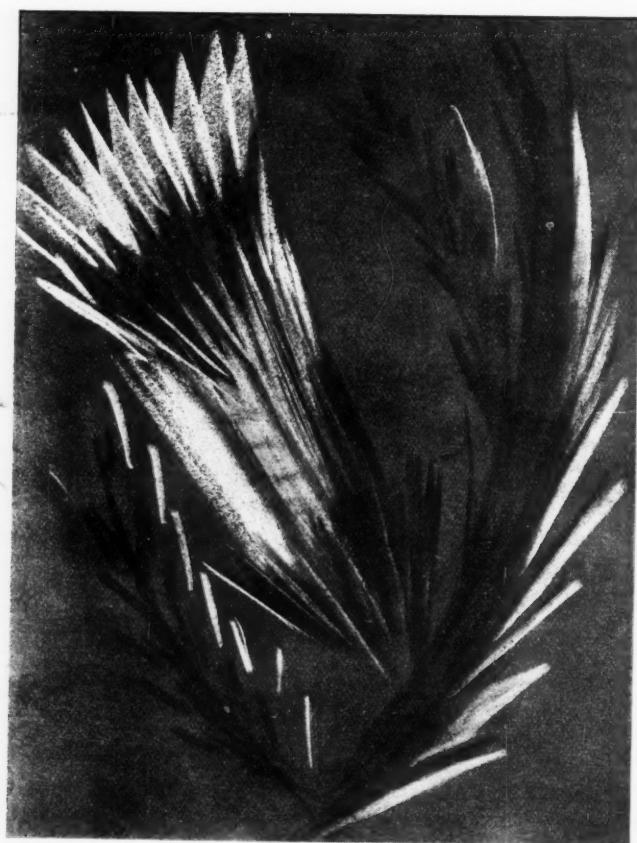
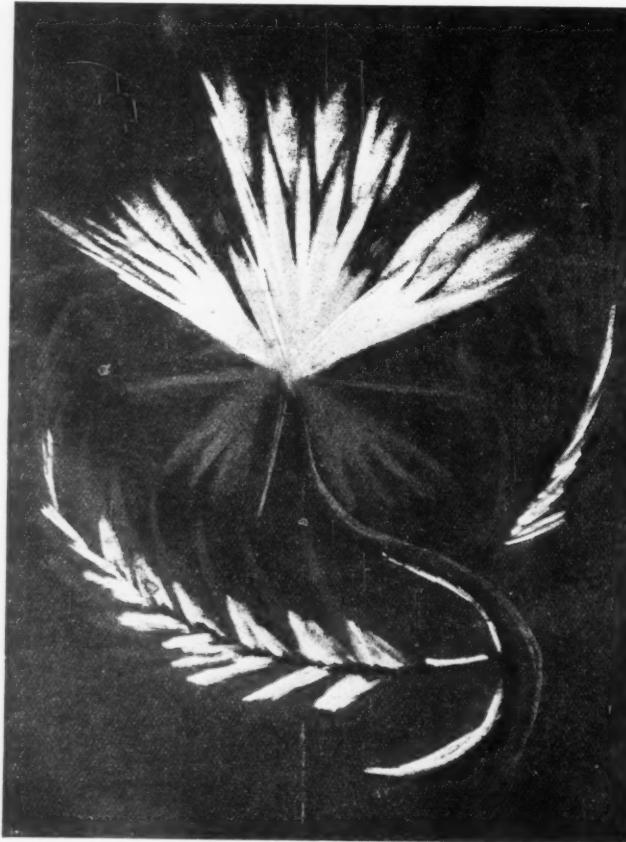
with the lines and shapes chosen. Design was thus made the starting point, selection, then arrangement under restriction. Good spacing increased as time went on. Arrangement began to appear on even the little 5" x 7" slips of paper on which choices of lines and shapes were made. Choices of harmonious combinations were finally made, also, where as at first there was a tendency to choose, for example, a square, a circle, and a wavering, wriggling, ugly line to be used together. At the risk of earning the contempt of the student for such utterly simple work, about fifteen of these little exercises were given, criticised, and used in forming judgments for use in more elaborate work to follow. The order of giving the exercises was not necessarily the same as the arrangement here illustrated.

It was considered important to use abstract shapes. If the exercise based on the direction: "Draw me a humorous animal", results in a crude, cheap result without humor, then arranging lines and shapes chosen because they were beautiful and harmonious as an abstract group produced simple, but good results, animals that were crisply humorous. Students were strongly discouraged in choosing shapes not abstract; static, daisy-like shapes were gradually changed to beautiful triangles or at least to single petal forms; and the results usually were best when there was occult balance used. Otherwise the petal form had a tendency to be repeated to form a static daisy design.

This method of working from "the parts to the whole" was considered best for beginners, but is, of course, to be superseded later by work "from the whole to the parts" when the student is able to have that desirable vision of the whole before he starts. The enthusiasm these little exercises developed was quite charming, and the ease with which the later work was attacked and accomplished is shown by Exercise 6 which was one of a group of final examination "questions." The specifications was: Use this group of one line and two shapes in designing a motif. Represent either type of balance. You may change the relative proportion, and, before starting, the direction. Then leave the direction the same. Show value contrast and emphasis.



## DESIGN



Drawings in Pastel by Students of Polytechnic High School, San Francisco, Calif.



Bowl—Nellie Hagan

For white china or yellow pottery paint in all the design with copper lustre. Wash over the whole bowl with Light Brown lustre and pad until even. For Belleek use Nankin Blue for flower forms and all bands. Remainder of design and spots in borders, Emerald Green.



Inside of Bowl



Small Pitcher—Jetta Ehlers

Tinting, light wash of two parts Yellow Brown and one part Yellow Green. Use same color in deeper value for background of border. All bands and handle, Royal Blue with wee bit of Black added. Large flower, inside section, Yellow Brown; outer section, Violet No. 2. Dark places the Royal Blue mixture. Bell flower, Yellow Red. Leaves, Royal Green one-half, Apple Green one-half.



A Decorative Panel Showing the Spirit of Modern Design, by May Warner

#### EDITORIAL NOTE

In assembling the material out of which we build each monthly issue of DESIGN-Keramic Studio it is our aim to create a complete unit with its necessary variety and balance. As we are particularly anxious to give our readers the best there is in the field for designers, craftsmen, teachers and students of design excellent guidance could be given if subscribers would let us hear from them occasionally regarding the general tone of the Magazine or any specific matter pertaining to its contents and make up. If the Magazine is to keep growing with the contemporary movement it must at intervals make adjustments and it is in relation to these changes, particularly, that we welcome the suggestions of our friends.

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS FOR THE SUMMER ISSUES

Now that the Summer months are here and many of our subscribers change their addresses it is important to notify us of any change *at once* or request us to hold their Magazine until Fall, which we will be very glad to do. Magazines are not forwarded like first-class mail and we do not always know when they have not been delivered. Many of our recent numbers have been so much in demand that they are no longer available and we find ourselves obliged to tell our patrons it is impossible to supply them. To avoid this situation and to be sure of receiving every number notify us promptly of any change of address. We strongly recommend immediate renewal of subscriptions at expiration in order to keep complete files.